

missions and took off on time 100 percent of the time. Just seven B-1s dropped 20 percent of the bombs, over 2½ million pounds of munitions, during that conflict.

Now, currently in Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, B-1s are currently flying a large percentage of the bomber missions in Afghanistan and have destroyed a large percentage of the total targets. B-1s are dropping precision weapons and carpet bombing Taliban strongholds on a continuous basis. Mr. Speaker, the B-1 is playing a huge and important role in the war.

I would be remiss, too, Mr. Speaker, if I did not acknowledge the folks from South Dakota and my home State from Ellsworth Air Force Base who are doing a remarkable job in Afghanistan.

Ellsworth Air Force Base has deployed a large number of air crew members, maintenance, and support personnel to support the war on terrorism. South Dakota soldiers and airmen prepare meals and load bombs. Airmen from South Dakota put themselves in harm's way.

The Ellsworth Air Force commander, as I said earlier, Colonel Rice, commands all B-1 and B-52 operations over Afghanistan. In the war on terrorism, the men and women of Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, have shouldered a huge responsibility in an effort to make America safe against the evil that lurks in terrorist camps and caves throughout the world.

Air Force B-2, B-1, and B-52 bombers flew about 10 percent of the combat missions over Afghanistan, but dropped more than 80 percent of the tonnage expended, hitting 70 percent of the aim points identified, and damaged or destroyed about three-quarters of all the targets in this operation.

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay special tribute to the folks from South Dakota and Ellsworth Air Force Base, and to Commander Ed Rice, for the tremendous effort those folks have played in leading us to the successes we are seeing and the progress we are making in winning the war on terrorism.

I would also acknowledge the important role that the B-1 bomber has played in this very important mission. We would not be where we are today, Mr. Speaker, were the B-1 not the workhorse in Afghanistan.

I believe it is significant in light of the discussions we are currently having about military strategy and force structure as we head into the future that the B-1 bomber, in its role in Afghanistan, that we acknowledge the tremendous success, the tremendous assets and attributes that this particular plane and weapons systems is able to possess and bring to our military arsenal, and our ability to protect America and to keep it safe in this new century against the evils of terrorism and other threats that may be projected against the United States.

Mr. Speaker, today I would simply close by, again, acknowledging the men

and women at Ellsworth Air Force Base, 28th Bomber Wing, and the B-1 as the workhorse of the bomber fleet we are using to win the war in Afghanistan.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE FAILS TO MEET TODAY TO FINISH WORK ON AIRLINE SECURITY LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I was shocked to find out that the conferees on the House aviation security package have just canceled the conference at the behest of the House leadership for today.

That is extraordinary to me. It has been more than 2 months since the terrorist attacks, nearly 1 month since the Senate passed a bill 100 to 0, and next week is Thanksgiving, the busiest travel weekend of the year, at least historically in terms of aviation, although concerns about the system might crimp that a bit this year.

Yet, the conferees did not manage to work over the weekend. The conferees met yesterday for an hour and a half and did not manage to work late into the night. Today the conference is canceled. We hear that the Republicans are going to caucus with the White House but not include Democrats in the discussions. It sounds a little bit like a formula for disaster.

What is the system that they are defending? Here is the system that the Republican leadership is defending.

At Boston, part of a concourse, and this is yesterday, at Logan Airport was evacuated. Five hundred passengers were rescreened after an exit door was left unattended by the private security firm.

Chicago: A gentleman who boarded a flight in Miami was just randomly rechecked boarding a flight to Hong Kong in Chicago, having gone through screening, private screening, in Miami, and was found to have large cutting implements in his luggage; apparently innocent, he is a chef, but these are not allowed on the plane. We cannot even take our cuticle scissors. Yesterday he had something that more resembled meat cleavers.

Of course, there have been 24 major security violations prior to yesterday, and we are up to 26. Basically, they get about a 50 percent batting average; that is, every other day it seems like there are no known major security breaches in the screening system. However, before September 11, the private screening companies, over the last 5 years, averaged one security breach a day that was serious enough to be prosecuted or fined, one a day.

This is the largest private security firm in the United States of America, Argenbright Security, owned by Securicor of Europe. They have some problems. They were found last year to

have committed felony criminal offenses. They had hired and maintained known felons on staff and falsified documents to the Federal Government.

Of course, they provide security at the largest airport in Texas, and they are being very ably defended by the majority whip and the majority leader: Let us keep these people in business, they are doing such a great job.

Guess what: They were just found to have violated their probation which they were put on last year for their criminal violations, and their probation has been extended another 5 years.

They are saying, well, we will more closely supervise people. What provides closer supervision than probation? I guess if we started putting the CEOs in jail maybe we would get their attention. But right now I think that is the closest supervision they can provide, yet we are delaying the conference, delaying the bill, to defend the right of these pathetically failing companies to stay in business.

They say, well, we will have very strict Federal standards. We will set wages and benefits. The Federal Government will train the people, the Federal Government will supervise the people. They will be put in uniforms that look like Federal uniforms, but they will not be Federal uniforms. They will be made faux deputies; they will be deputized by the Federal Government but given no powers, and they will be given badges that look like Federal badges. They are going to do all of that.

What is the role left for these failing private security companies except to collect their ill-gotten gains, their profits? We will end up with more supervisors under that system because of all the promises they have had to make.

They say, we know it does not work very well, so we will put Federal supervisors at every screening point. We will put Federal supervisors at every conveyor belt. We will put Federal supervisors at every boarding gate.

By the time the Republicans finish defending the failing private security firms, they have created a Rube Goldberg that is twice as big as the Federal system would be if the solution had been adopted as was adopted 100 to 0 by the United States Senate more than a month ago.

But we cannot agree on that, and today we cannot even meet to discuss it. Last weekend they did not have time to stay in town and discuss it. Thanksgiving is looming very near in the future. They talk about not delivering a turkey bill. I will tell the Members what, the biggest turkey or the biggest bad April fool, out of date, will be if we do not give the American people a robust overhaul of this system before the busiest travel weekend of the year.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under a previous order of the